



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

ORDER OF ST JOHN INVESTITURE **Wednesday, 27 September 2023**

Acknowledgments

Cameron Oxley, Chancellor of the Australian Priory of the Order of St John

Mark Engel, Chairman, St John Ambulance Victoria

Gordon Botwright, CEO, St John Ambulance Victoria

Postulants

Distinguished guests

I begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the unceded lands on which this House stands – the Wurundjeri and Bunurong people – and pay my respects to their Elders, past and present.

It is a pleasure to welcome you all to Government House today for the Order of St John Investitures.

This ceremony is one part of a 140 year-long legacy. It provides an opportunity to reflect on the changes we have seen in both the Order and the way it now serves the community.

The Victoria we know today would be unrecognisable to the founders of Australia's first St John Ambulance branch.

When it was established in 1883, the need for St John services was significant, with our State being home to only 454 registered medical practitioners.

Today, Victorians are cared for by more than 34,000 registered medical practitioners, many of whom volunteer with the Order.

Much has also changed within St John.

Initially, Ashford Litters were used to transport patients. These two wheeled carriages supported a single stretcher and required the strength of two St John members to pull the carriage.

Ambulance transportation was an exclusively male profession.

And First Aid classes were separated into male and female cohorts.

In 2022, the impressive fleet of St John ambulance vehicles allowed members to complete 1,774 community transport trips.

And 69,811 students were trained in co-ed First Aid sessions.

Whatever else has changed, the gratitude of Victorians for the work that you do, has not changed over 140 years.

In 1905, The Herald said, *“the work of the St John Ambulance Association is one that is deserving of every encouragement”* and that remains true.

Another constant is the close relationship between Government House and your Order.

Victorian Governors have had the pleasure of providing Vice-Regal patronage since the Order’s founding in 1883 and have served in Prior roles and Knights of Grace since Sir Winston Dugan became Prior in 1945.

Since then, each Victorian Governor has taken on those roles, participating in the celebrations of this organisation’s achievements.

The new members being recognised today are adding to a legacy of compassion, selflessness and community spirit.

Those being promoted are an example of this spirit made possible through the support of this community and the contribution of each of you have provided over a sustained period.

Congratulations to all of you and thank you for committing your time to the *Service of Humanity*.